

**USACHPPM**  
**HEALTH INFORMATION OPERATIONS (HIO) UPDATE**

21 January 2005

The HIO Update provides information regarding global medical and veterinary issues of interest to the United States (US) Army. The update does not attempt to analyze the information as to its strategic or tactical impact on the US Army and should not be regarded as a medical intelligence product. Medical intelligence products are available from the [Armed Forces Medical Intelligence Center](#). The information in the HIO Update should provide an increased awareness of current and emerging health-related issues.

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## HOT TOPICS

### Antiviral Drugs Can Be Less Costly Than Flu Shots

13 January - Reuters Health reported that [influenza](#) vaccination for healthy working adults is "reasonable" from public health standpoint, but it is not necessarily a cost-saving measure. In general, antiviral treatment of the flu with amantadine (Symmetrel) is more cost-effective than preventive flu vaccination. Researchers compared outcomes of four strategies: annual flu vaccination, amantadine given when a case of flu is suspected, rapid testing for influenza infection followed by treatment with oseltamivir (Tamiflu) if results are positive, or no intervention. Overall, amantadine was the least expensive strategy at \$234 per person per year, whereas vaccination costs averaged out to \$239 per person. For every influenza season except 1997-1998, however, annual vaccination was the most effective strategy in keeping workers on the job and out of the hospital, and in four seasons it was the least expensive. "If vaccination cost was less than \$16 or time lost from work exceeded 2.4 days per episode of influenza, then vaccination was cost saving compared with all other strategies," the investigators said. [View Article](#)

### Catholic Church Shifts Policy on Condoms

19 January – Yahoo! News reported that the Catholic Church in Spain has said it supports the use of condoms to prevent the spread of AIDS. The Catholic Church has repeatedly rebuffed campaigns for it to endorse the use of condoms in the fight against AIDS. The Vatican states that condoms, because it is a form of artificial birth control, cannot be used to help prevent the spread of HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. Martinez Campos said the church's stance was backed by the scientific world. He cited a recent study by experts in the medical magazine Lancet that supported the so-called "ABC" approach of abstinence, being faithful to partners and using condoms. The change in view was welcomed by the Spanish Federation of Lesbians, Gays, Transsexuals and Bisexuals. As recently as November the Spanish Bishops Conference had vehemently opposed the Health Ministry's campaign to promote the use of condoms. The paper quoted Martinez Campos as saying then that it was "gravely false" to maintain that contraceptives prevented the spread of HIV. [View Article](#)

### Chamomile Tea May Help Beat Colds, Cramps

17 January – Reuters reported that chamomile tea can protect the body from a host of ills, including [colds](#) and [menstrual cramps](#). Researchers tested the urine of 14 healthy volunteers who drank five cups of chamomile tea every day for two weeks. They found that drinking tea produced changes in the urine that suggest there was an increase in a substance that helps the body fight off colds. Tea drinkers also produced higher levels of a substance called glycine, which can ease muscle spasms.

This finding may help support claims the tea can relieve menstrual cramps. What remains unknown, says study author Dr. Elaine Holmes, is whether these changes are good or bad overall. [View Article](#)

## Experts Fail to Perform CPR Correctly

18 January – HealthDayNews reported that [cardiopulmonary resuscitation](#) (CPR), the emergency treatment for people who suffer cardiac arrest, isn't being done by medical professionals the way it's supposed to be done. Guidelines say the chest should be compressed about 1.5 inches 100 times a minute, and that mouth-to-mouth breathing should produce a ventilation rate of 12 to 16 breaths a minute to keep people alive in the life-and-death minutes after the heart stops beating. One study of 176 people who went into cardiac arrest outside of hospitals in three European countries found that paramedics and nurse anesthetists had an average compression rate of 64 times a minute, with an average of 11 ventilations per minute. The other study, monitoring CPR given to 67 patients at the University of Chicago Hospitals, found that in 26 percent of the cases, compression rates were below 90 per minute and that 37 percent of the compressions were too shallow. And ventilation rates were usually too high, more than 20 per minute in 61 percent of the cases. The lead author of the U.S. report sees an answer in better equipment - a defibrillator that gives a shock to get the heart beating again, but with the addition of a microchip that gives feedback so compression frequency and depth as well as ventilation rate can be adjusted. [View Article](#)

## First Biological Test for ADHD Unveiled

17 January – New Scientist reported that the first biological test for [attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder](#) has been developed. The researchers claim the diagnosis, based on examination of eye movements, is more than 93% accurate and could lead to earlier identification and treatment for children with the condition. Children were placed in front of a computer screen while wearing special goggles to monitor their eye movements and asked to use their eyes to "lock-on to" and follow spots of light. "Children with ADHD show large difference in eye movements compared with normal children. For example, those without ADHD could follow the light spot for 30 seconds to as much as five minutes, whereas the children with the disorder could only follow the stimulus for about three to five seconds," says Giorgos Pavlidis at University of Brunel, UK, who led the study. [View Article](#)

## Grapefruit Juice and Medication Can Be a Deadly Mix

17 January – EurekAlert reported that the U.S. Food & Drug Administration requires all prospective new drugs to be tested for [interactions](#) with grapefruit juice. And a warning about grapefruit juice is included in the "food-drug interactions" that come with dozens of medications. An expert on drug interactions explains that grapefruit juice is one of the foods most likely to cause problems with drugs, because it is metabolized by the same enzyme in the liver that breaks down many drugs. The cytochrome P-450 3A4 enzyme breaks down grapefruit juice into useful components for body, just like it breaks down dozens of medications. When the system is overloaded, the grapefruit juice can "swamp" the system, keeping the liver busy and blocking it from breaking down drugs and other substances. Drugs that use the same pathway and interact with grapefruit juice target some of the most common health problems doctors see today. The list consists of more than 50 medications, including some drugs used to treat high cholesterol, depression, high blood pressure, cancer, depression, pain, impotence, and allergies. [View Article](#)

## New Insights into Fat's Effect on the Body

18 January – Forbes reported that scientists have identified a gene called lipin that regulates how your body produces and uses fat. The researchers say lipin may offer a new drug target for

controlling [obesity](#), [diabetes](#) and other weight-related health problems. "Lipin regulates how the body stores and burns fat. Our findings suggest that differences in lipin levels may play a role in why some people are more prone to weight gain than others who consume the same calories," lead investigator Karen Reue said in a prepared statement. She and her colleagues studied two groups of specially bred mice. One group had a genetic mutation that boosted lipin levels in their fat tissue and the other group had a mutation that increased lipin levels in their muscles. There was also a control group of normal mice. All three groups of mice were fed a high-fat diet for six weeks. The mice with elevated lipin in their fat or muscles gained twice the amount of weight as normal mice. In fat tissue, lipin influences the capacity of your cells to store fat. In muscle, lipin affects the rate at which your body burns fat, the researchers said. "When we increased lipin in the muscle, the cells burned carbohydrates before fat. When lipin is absent, however, the cells burn fat before carbohydrates," Reue said. "We saw a different effect when lipin acted on fat tissue. High levels of lipin promoted fat storage. Lipin deficiency prevented the cells from forming and storing fat," she explained. [View Article](#)

## Too Much Added Sugar Worsens Kids' Overall Diet

17 January – Reuter reported that U.S. investigators found that preschoolers who obtained a higher percentage of their daily calories from [added sugars](#) tended to get fewer calories from healthier sources, including foods rich in fiber, vitamins and minerals. Study author Dr. Sibylle Kranz explained that kids have an "internal control" system in their bodies that limits their intake of calories, so they typically eat the same number of calories, regardless of the source. "If a child drinks a regular soda, for example, that drink is replacing another potentially high-nutrient food," she said. It's important for kids to get the vast majority of their calories from foods rich in vitamins and minerals, she noted. "Since most foods that are high in added sugar have very low nutrient density -- very little vitamins and minerals -- they contribute calories but not the important micronutrients for health and growth," said Kranz, who is based at Pennsylvania State University in State College. Kranz noted that "added" sugars are not the same as sugars naturally found in foods like fruits and dairy. Added sugars are included during baking or manufacturing, and are primarily found in sodas, fruit drinks, desserts and candy. [View Article](#)

## Vaccine Extends Immunity from Deadly Meningitis

17 January – USA Today reported that a new vaccine that provides long-term immunity from deadly meningococcal bacteria has been approved by the Food and Drug Administration and soon might be recommended for teenagers. The vaccine, Menactra, made by sanofi pasteur (formerly Aventis Pasteur), is licensed for ages 11 to 55. An older vaccine made by the same company can be given to anyone older than 2, but its potency wanes after seven to 10 years. The new vaccine uses a different technology that is expected to provide longer, possibly lifelong, protection against four types of meningococcal bacteria that account for up to 83% of cases in teens and young adults. [Meningococcal disease](#) causes bacterial meningitis and blood infections that can quickly overwhelm the body. It kills up to 12% of those who become ill, and 20% of survivors suffer permanent disability. [View Article](#)

# Focus on Epidemiology

## Health Disparities Experienced by Black or African Americans --- United States

15 January – HealthDayNews reported that Black Americans bear disproportionate risks of avoidable illness, disability and death from certain conditions, including AIDS, stomach and colorectal cancer, and murder, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says in a new report. In 2002, the number of potential years of life lost due to cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and illnesses affecting

infants and young children was three times higher among blacks age 75 or younger than among whites. The [disparity](#) jumped to 11 times for AIDS and nine times for murder, the report found. The Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report cited poor access to local health resources and "unequal implementation of effective interventions" in black communities. In related research published in the same journal, the CDC found that blacks were much more prone to high blood pressure than other racial and ethnic groups. Some 40.5 percent of non-Hispanic blacks suffer from hypertension, versus 27.4 percent of whites and 25.1 percent of Mexican Americans. A third study concluded that blacks were at significantly greater risk of disability after suffering a stroke. [View Article](#) [View Report](#)

## DoD-GEIS: Influenza Surveillance at NAMRU-3

19 January - Over the past several years, the Naval Medical Research Unit No. 3 (NAMRU-3) in Cairo, Egypt has employed DoD-GEIS funding to establish [influenza surveillance](#) programs in the Middle East and throughout the Eastern Mediterranean region, covering a population of almost 500 million. NAMRU-3's influenza surveillance program provides the only information on circulating strains to the World Health Organization (WHO) for vaccine development in several countries in this region, thereby lessening the risk of epidemic in an area of high US national security concern. During 2004 over 4,730 human samples were collected and 348 influenza isolates have thus far obtained and typed. New in 2004, DoD-GEIS supported influenza surveillance of migratory birds passing through Egypt to provide information on potentially dangerous strains being introduced into the region. NAMRU-3 recently partnered with the US Army Medical Research Unit-Kenya (USAMRU-K) in Nairobi and the Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI) to expand DoD-GEIS influenza surveillance into parts of sub-Saharan Africa where there is little or no information on circulating strains. This collaboration will begin to close one of the few remaining gaps in WHO's global influenza surveillance program. Submitted by CDR David Fryauff, GEIS Coordinator, NAMRU-3. Information on Influenza (avian and human) including the DoD Global Influenza Program, WNV, Leishmaniasis and severe respiratory syndromes, including SARS, is available on the [DoD-GEIS website](#).

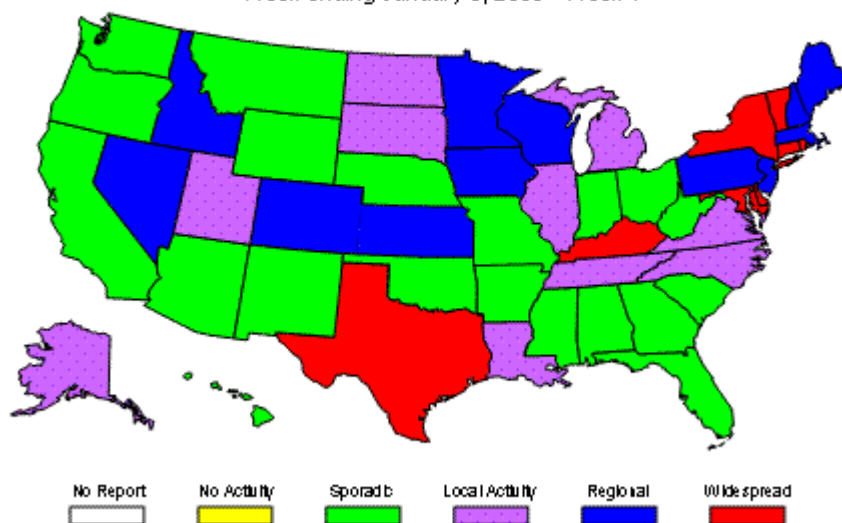
## Influenza Update

### [CDC Weekly Influenza Report for Week Ending 8 January – Week 1](#)

From 2 -8 January, 2005, influenza activity continued to increase mostly in the eastern United States.

### Weekly Influenza Activity Estimates Reported by State & Territorial Epidemiologists

Week ending January 8, 2005 - Week 1

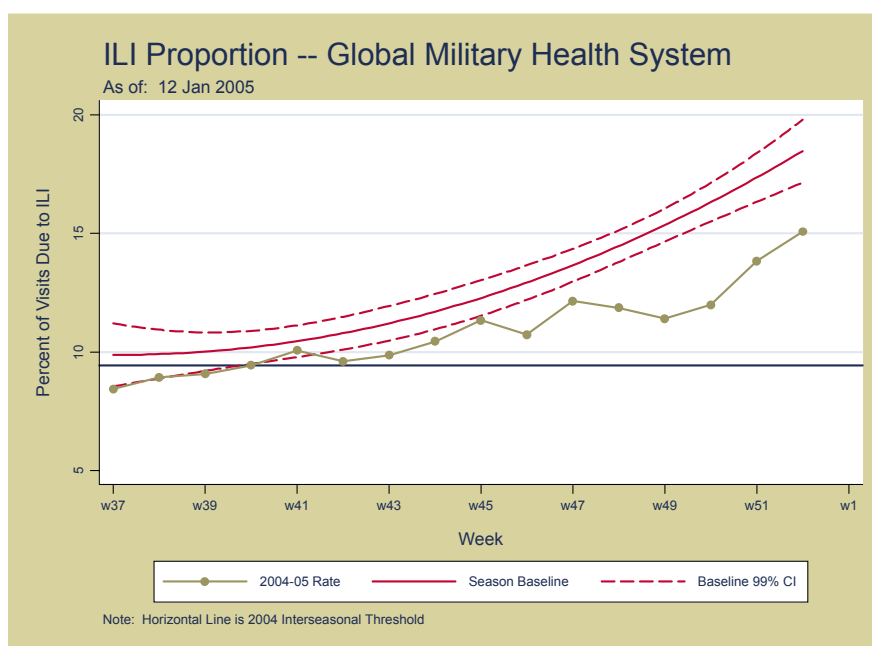


### European Influenza Surveillance Scheme Report for Week Ending 9 January - Week 1

Influenza activity continues to increase gradually in Europe, the exception being Spain where clinical activity has risen sharply in all age groups. The incidence of influenza-like-illness cases was above the baseline level of activity in seven countries in week 01/2005. Geographically, widespread activity was reported by Spain for the second week running and regional activity was reported by three countries. The number of laboratory confirmed influenza cases reported per week remained approximately the same in Europe while the number of confirmed RSV cases declined. Influenza A virus accounted for 94% of total detections in week 01/2005, H3 being the main subtype.

### DOD Worldwide Influenza Surveillance Program for Week Ending 8 January - Week 1

**Influenza-Like Illness** - This graph plots the percentage of weekly outpatient visits at military installations that had an ICD-9 code correlating with Influenza-Like Illness as defined by [ESSENCE](#). Since 3 October 2004, the Epidemiological Surveillance Division (AFIOH/SDE) has processed 684 specimens as part of the influenza surveillance program. Of those specimens, 72 (11%) were positive for influenza A and 6 (1%) were positive for influenza B. In addition, 220 specimens are still being processed.



***Other timely information can be found in:***

The current issue of the Army Medical Surveillance Activity's [Medical Surveillance Monthly Report](#)

This week's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

## USCENTCOM

### Pakistan: Leishmaniasis Outbreak in Parts of Balochistan and Sindh

10 January – Reuters reported that an outbreak of [leishmaniasis](#) has been reported in parts of the southern Pakistani provinces of Sindh and Balochistan. "There are so many cases in the Dadu district of Sindh alone. The number of cases reported to health authorities has gone up from 402 to more than 1,200 in just two days. And we are receiving similar reports from the adjoining districts of Sukkur, Jacobabad, Larkana and Naushero Feroze," said Dr. Hadi Bux Jatoti, director-general (DG) of health services in Sindh. Leishmaniasis is endemic in the provinces of Balochistan, North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). It was reported in Sindh for the first time in 2000, and since then the cases have been mounting. The DG health services Sindh has proposed aerial spraying against the sand fly in areas of Sindh and Balochistan to contain the disease. Spraying wouldn't work because there are continuous migrations of the sand fly from Afghanistan, where its prevalence is far higher, so the host and vector would always be present, the WHO medical officer said. [View Article](#)



# USEUCOM

## Four Dead as Cholera Outbreak Hits Burundi Capital

17 January – Turkish Press.com reported that a [cholera](#) outbreak has hit a slum in the northern part of Burundi's capital, killing four people in the past week. In addition to the deaths, at least 64 people have been diagnosed with the deadly disease since January 13, Mathias Karimwabo, the local official in charge of Bujumbura's Kamenge district, said. An official with Burundi's health ministry, Georges Nsengiyunva, confirmed an outbreak of cholera in Kamenge and said steps were being taken to prevent it from spreading although some cases had already been reported outside the district. Karimwabo blamed the outbreak of the waterborne disease on poor sanitation and stagnant water in the Kavumu section of Kamenge district. [View Article](#)

## Ghana: New Malaria Drugs and Expansion of ARV Treatment

17 January – IRIN News reported that the Ghanaian government has issued tough new guidelines for medical practitioners as it prepares for a big hike in health spending. It has ordered a switch to more expensive, but more effective drugs for treating [malaria](#) and a big increase in antiretroviral (ARV) treatment for people living with [AIDS](#). The 517-page guidelines, along with a new list of essential medicines, aim to deliver efficient treatment at least cost as the government prepares to boost its expenditure on drugs from the estimated 2004 level of US \$6 million. [View Article](#)

## Influenza Outbreak Blamed for Overcrowding at A&E Units

14 January – Ireland On-Line reported that a doubling in the number of [influenza](#) cases throughout the country has reportedly been blamed for the pressure on accident and emergency departments in recent days. Reports said the Health Service Executive had identified a doubling in reported influenza cases as one of the factors causing overcrowding in A&E units. The Irish Nurses Organisation said 254 patients were waiting on trolleys in A&E units yesterday due to a shortage of hospital beds. This is down from 422 on Wednesday. The HSE has reportedly called on high-risk people who have not already received the 'flu vaccine to be immunised immediately in light of the increased infection rate. [View Article](#)

## Measles Scare Prompts Vaccinations in Posh Areas

18 January – AllAfrica.com reported that the [measles](#) vaccine is cheap and readily available, yet South Africa's health authorities have battled to contain measles outbreaks in every province since 2003 because not enough children have been vaccinated against the disease. Last year, the worst affected provinces were Gauteng (563 cases) and KwaZulu-Natal (313), according to the health department's national immunization program manager, Johann van den Heever. Authorities in Western Cape are now poised to conduct an immunization drive at schools in some of Cape Town's most privileged suburbs, following a measles outbreak in Fish Hoek. Immunization cover in this suburb is less than 50%, far from the 90% cover needed to prevent an epidemic, says Fawzia Desai, the province's deputy director for communicable diseases and child health. A similarly low cover exists in Constantia and along the Atlantic seaboard, she says. [View Article](#)

## Uganda to Launch Anti-Polio Drive after Outbreak Feared in Sudan

18 January – Turkish Press.com reported that Uganda will launch a nationwide drive to vaccinate nearly three million children against [polio](#) next month. Uganda has not recorded a case of polio since



1997, but about 2.8 million Ugandan children are considered at risk of contracting the disease as they have not yet completed their course of vaccinations. "This puts Uganda at a high risk of importing the polio virus from the polio-infected countries like Sudan, Ghana, Togo, Cameroon, Benin, Central African Republic and Botswana," it said. The UN's World Health Organization (WHO) and children's agency UNICEF began the vaccination campaign in Sudan last week due to fears of an outbreak there after a leap in polio cases from none to 112 over a nine-month period in 2004. [View Article](#)

## USNORTHCOM

### British Columbia Group Criticizes Handling of Avian Flu

18 January - The Globe and Mail reported that the Canadian Food Inspection Agency is giving itself a passing grade for its handling of the [avian-flu](#) outbreak in British Columbia. But a poultry-industry representative who helped write a review of the agency's response says the industry "dodged a bullet" with last year's epidemic. The review says the food-inspection agency found some areas that need improvement, especially in emergency planning and communication. But it says overall, the effort to control the flu was successful. However, British Columbia Poultry Committee president Ray Nickel is more critical of the agency's performance. He says the disease should never have spread beyond the five-kilometer "hot zone" of the initial outbreak near Abbotsford. [View Article](#)

### FDA to Vote Again on Morning-After Pill

15 January – HealthDayNews reported that The U.S. Food and Drug Administration could decide this week whether to make the [emergency contraception pill](#) known as Plan B available without a prescription to women 16 and older. Plan B can reduce the chance of pregnancy by up to 89 percent if taken within 72 hours of intercourse, although it's more effective if taken soon after sex. If a woman already is pregnant, the pill has no effect. Backers of the contraceptive say it's a safe way to prevent thousands of unwanted pregnancies, as well as countless abortions. Opponents contend the pill would encourage women to engage in risky sex. The FDA rejected an initial request by the pill's maker, Barr Laboratories, to make the drug available over-the-counter. Barr is proposing that drug stores check customers' ages to be sure they're at least 16, the AP said. [View Article](#)

### Pertussis Outbreak Hits Yellowstone County

15 January – The Billings Gazette reported a [pertussis](#) outbreak in Yellowstone County. Eighteen cases of the highly contagious ailment have been diagnosed recently. The number of confirmed cases so far this winter has spurred members of the Unified Health Command to brand the situation an outbreak. Typically, 5,000 to 7,000 cases of pertussis a year are reported in the United States, primarily in people who have not been vaccinated against the disease. Montana usually sees 10 to 30 reported cases reported, although last year about 80 cases were reported throughout the state. [View Article](#)

### Tuberculosis Outbreak in a Low-Incidence State—Indiana, 2001-2004

19 January – The Journal of the American Medical Association reported that Indiana is a low-incidence state, with a [tuberculosis](#) (TB) case rate of 2.3 per 100,000 population in 2003. However, the TB case rate in Allen County increased to 4.7 per 100,000 population (with 16 patients reported with TB disease) in 2003 and to 7.0 per 100,000 population (with 12 patients reported with TB

disease) during the first half of 2004. During January 2001–June 2004, a total of 59 cases of TB disease were reported in Allen County. Cases in which patients had a matching *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* genotype or, when no isolate was available for genotyping, an epidemiologic link to a patient with TB disease, were considered outbreak related. Of the 59 cases investigated, 25 (42%) were outbreak related, 21 (84%) had epidemiologic links (Figure) and four (16%) had genotypic links only. A total of 516 contacts of the 25 linked patients have been identified. Of these, 423 (82%) were tested with at least an initial tuberculin skin test (TST); the remaining 18% are either pending follow-up or cannot be found. Among the tested contacts, 85 (20%) had positive TST results and 13 other persons reported a previous positive TST result. Of these 98 contacts, 13 (13%) received a diagnosis of TB disease upon further evaluation. The remaining 85 (87%) were candidates for latent TB infection (LTBI) treatment; 49 (58%) of the candidates started therapy, but, of these, 12 (24%) defaulted. For two of the persons who defaulted and one who refused treatment, infection progressed to TB disease. These three patients are suspected as the sources of TB infection for 16 of 24 patients with TB disease. Each contact who defaulted cited lack of TB knowledge as a major barrier to completing LTBI treatment. [View Article](#)

## USPACOM

### China Ready with SARS Vaccine

16 January – The Press Trust of India reported that Chinese scientists have claimed success in developing a [SARS](#) vaccine that could be used among high-risk groups in the event of a large-scale outbreak again this spring. Trials among 36 volunteers have proved "effective" and "safe" in the first-phase human tests, said Yin Weiping, Managing Director of Beijing-based Sinovac Biotech Co Ltd which has produced the vaccine. By early December 2004, antibodies, without obvious side effects, had been found in all volunteers, who had the test vaccine, Yin said. The antibody brought about by the vaccine in animals is resistant to attacks by the active SARS virus, a coronavirus. Normally, only after a vaccine has passed the third-round of human trials in fighting an active virus which breaks out naturally is it provided to the public widely, he said. However, in the event of a sudden and widespread SARS outbreak, some high-risk groups, such as doctors might be immunised ahead of completion of the second and third round trials, said Dr. Lin Jiangtao of Beijing's Sino-Japanese Friendship Hospital, where the first tests were conducted. [View Article](#)

### Cholera Outbreak among Refugees

17 January – The Weekend Australian reported that cholera has struck in Aceh due to the unsanitary conditions left by the tsunami devastation, according to the Islamic relief organization Mer-C, which has teams of medics working in the worst-hit towns of Banda Aceh and Meulaboh. Twenty [cholera](#) cases were being treated in a refugee camp in Nagan Raya, in the Meulaboh area, said Mer-C official Jose Rizal Jurnal. Two of the cases were serious, with the patients severely dehydrated from constant diarrhea, Dr. Jurnal said. One 12-year-old child had contracted the disease, while the other cases were adults. World Health Organisation epidemiologist Tom Grein said he had yet to document any cases of cholera, although there had been cases of severe diarrhea along the west coast, where Mer-C claimed to have found the disease. "We are very concerned," Dr. Grein said. "Cholera is high on our radar screen." If the patients were in proper care, he said, cholera was only fatal in about 1 per cent of cases, with dehydration the most serious problem. However, providing proper healthcare for the hundreds of thousands of homeless Acehnese has been proving difficult, with some districts still only reachable by helicopter.

Dr. Grein said that of the communicable diseases, the WHO was most concerned about diarrhea-type diseases including cholera, as well as measles, malaria and tetanus. The Acehnese had a low immunization rate, and cases of measles had already been documented. [Malaria](#) was of particular concern because the pools of stagnant water left by the tsunami had led to a dramatic increase in mosquitoes. The WHO had already documented 59 cases of [tetanus](#). Tetanus, or lock-jaw, is a bacterial disease that affects the central nervous system and kills in as many as a quarter of cases. The disease has been contracted by people cut and wounded as they searched through rubble and sharp debris in search of their belongings, Dr Grein said. [View Article](#)

## Fears Grow as Bird Flu Outbreaks Spread

17 January - Scotsman.com reported that Vietnam reported two new suspected cases of [bird flu](#) in humans as outbreaks among poultry spread to all parts of the country. Tests were being conducted to determine whether the two patients being treated at Hanoi's Hospital of Tropical Medicine for Tropical Diseases contracted bird flu, said hospital director Nguyen Duc Hien. Tests on a 48-year-old man from the northern province of Thai Binh who died on Saturday were negative for bird flu, Hien said. The man was initially suspected of having contracted the disease. The People's Army newspaper identified the two suspected cases as the younger brother of the 48-year-old man and a 62-year-old man from Hanoi. Bird flu outbreaks among poultry have been reported in central Quang Nam and Ninh Thuan provinces, the latest region to have been hit by the disease, the Department of Animal Health said on its website today. Over the past three weeks, Vietnam has reported four human deaths from bird flu – the country's first string of deaths since early September. Two other people who tested positive for the H5N1 strain of the bird flu remain in critical condition. [View Article](#)

## Government Urges Bird Flu Action

15 January – Viet Nam News reported that Prime Minister Phan Van Khai called for concerted efforts and drastic measures in affected areas to stamp out [avian flu](#). Khai said the bird flu is returning, particularly in Cuu Long (Mekong) Delta and southern provinces, and tends to spread quickly. Khai told the ministries to consider the fight against the outbreak as their "key and immediate missions" in order to ensure the health and safety of the public and food supplies during Tet (lunar new year). He said that action must be taken against outbreaks in new areas as soon as possible after being detected. [View Article](#)

## Indonesia Spraying To Quell Mosquitos

14 January – The Baltimore Sun reported that health officials plan to go door to door and tent to tent with mosquito-killing spray guns to head off [malaria](#). The devastation and heavy rains are creating conditions for the largest area of mosquito breeding sites Indonesia has ever seen, said the head of the aid group anchoring the anti-malaria campaign on Sumatra island. The pools of salt water created by the 26 December tsunami have been diluted by seasonal rains into a brackish water that mosquitos love. While the threat of cholera and dysentery outbreaks is diminishing by the day because clean water is increasingly getting to tsunami survivors, the danger of malaria and dengue fever epidemics is increasing, said Richard Allan, director of the Mentor Initiative, a public health group that fights malaria epidemics. The death toll from the earthquake and tsunami has topped 157,000 across 11 countries after Indonesia added nearly 4,000 to its tally. Allan warned that an outbreak of malaria could take an additional 100,000 lives around the Indian Ocean if authorities don't act quickly. The World Health Organization said yesterday that seven cases of malaria have been confirmed in Aceh province. They are popping up now both because malaria season is just beginning and because a reporting system has been put in place over the past few days. [View Article](#)

## Malaysia: Dengue Outbreak

15 January – The Malay Mail reported that office personnel, factory owners and contractors are advised to form their own committees in [dengue](#)-prone areas to check on aedes breeding ground in their respective areas. At the very least, they can put some larvicide like Abate at the breeding sites to destroy the aedes larvae, said Health Ministry's disease control director Dr. Ramlee Rahmat. He reiterated that people should not solely depend on fogging but spruce up dirty areas and remove containers which can hold water that can become ideal breeding ground for aedes mosquitoes. Dr. Ramlee maintained that the dengue situation in the country was "still high" with the number of people suffering from dengue increasing. On the death toll so far this year, Dr. Ramlee said he had heard of only one case since the second week of this month. [View Article](#)

## Situation Report 21 from the WHO

18 January – Continuing health assessments in the province of Aceh in Indonesia confirm that many people still lack access to the basics such as water, sanitation, hygiene and health care. It is also becoming increasingly clear that many people affected by the tsunami need psychosocial care. In other places, such as southern India, Sri Lanka and Thailand, the focus has moved more to planning for rehabilitation and reconstruction. Disease surveillance continues to be strengthened across the region in order to rapidly identify potential outbreaks. Experts are standing by in the case of an outbreak.

### Summary:

- No disease outbreaks have been reported In the Maldives; lack of water storage facilities is becoming an urgent problem.
- In Sri Lanka, lack of sanitation in some displacement camps remains a concern.
- In Somalia, health assessments for the affected population continue despite the difficult terrain, non-existent roads, size of the affected areas and communication constraints.
- Across the region, the need for mental health care and psychosocial counseling is becoming increasingly acute.

A table of relief efforts; damages; and the number of displaced, injured, missing and dead people is also included in the situation report. [View Report](#)

## Tsunamis Take Huge Psychological Toll

15 January – HealthDayNews reported that the devastating southern Asia tsunamis that killed more than 157,000 people last month and left survivors prone to potentially deadly epidemics have created another severe health problem -- [psychological trauma](#). European health ministers urged governments to be mindful of the emotional scars caused by the disaster. Children are particularly vulnerable. "The trauma for so many millions of children is a first. After World War II, there has not been such a trauma," said Marc Danzon, European regional director of the U.N.'s World Health Organization. The ministers released a 12-page mental health plan that recommends "professional help and assurances" for people in crises, including natural disasters. Asian officials said up to three-quarters of local health personnel could not work because of depression caused by the tsunamis' destruction. [View Article](#)

## WHO Experts Travel to Northern Philippines after Disease Outbreak

14 January – ABC Radio Australia reported that the World Health Organization has sent experts to the northern Philippines after an outbreak of a bacterial disease. The WHO representative to the Philippines, Jean-Marc Olive, says there is a need to closely monitor suspected cases of [meningococccemia](#) in the northern Philippines. He noted an exceptionally high fatality rate for the bacterial infection, which attacks the central nervous system and has symptoms similar to meningitis. Health officials say twenty-eight people are suspected to have died of the disease nationwide, 19 of which were in the mountain city of Baguio in the north. Foreigners traveling to the city have been required to be vaccinated before returning to their home countries. [View Article](#)

## USSOUTHCOM

### U.S. Issues Travel Warning for Guyana

19 January – Yahoo! News reported that the State Department issued a warning asking Americans to defer travel to Guyana because of flooding that has killed at least two people in the South American country over the past week. Guyana officials said thousands of people have been forced from their homes in the capital region of Georgetown because of flooding caused by several days of steady rains, the heaviest recorded in a century. President Bharrat Jagdeo said as many as 50,000 people are in need of fresh water, hot meals, and blankets. The State Department also authorized the voluntary departure of nonessential embassy employees and their families because of health and security risks, such as contaminated water systems. The warning also cautioned that thieves are preying on motorists traveling flooded roads. It also said that stores were running low on bread and most pharmacies were closed. [View Article](#)

Please contact us to comment on or suggest improvements to this report.

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